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DANCING IN SPAIN

“ Al ver bailar una muger bonita se olvida toda la filosofía.”

Mentele - Ensayos

(Watching a pretty woman dance all philosophy is forgotten)

by

CYRIL RICE

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FOREWORD

THIS book is not intended as an exhaustive technical account of Spanish dancing such as would appeal only to the professional, but rather is it an attempt to give some idea of the richness of this unique art, and a few examples of its most typical manifestations. I believe it to deal with a subject on which there is no existing work in English. If it persuades any readers to see Spanish dancers whenever the opportunity occurs, and enables them more fully to appreciate their art, it will have answered its purpose.

It is, I suppose, improbable that anyone will purchase it in the hope of learning from its contents how to take up the mantle of Argentina whenever that lady is disposed to relinquish it. No one has yet learnt to dance from a book, although I cannot help feeling that most dancers, especially English, make the great mistake of despising the help that can be derived from their study.

I have not been quite consistent in the degree in which I have used Spanish spellings in preference to the English forms. For the names of provinces I have generally used the native versions, but in those of the inhabitants of the various districts I have chosen those which sound less strange to English ears. A certain proportion of Spanish words seems inevitable in describing an art so intensely national, but where such expressions occur they are always explained.

CHAPTER I.

DANCING IN SPAIN

When Theophile Gautier visited Spain to assuage his romantic yearnings, he was in danger of being forced to the conclusion that the dancers he had visualised so ardently were a myth and a delusion. There seemed to be something in common between Dancers in Spain and Castles in the same country. Even Madrid failed to yield anything more exciting than could have been seen in the French capital. Always he was told that in some yet unvisited city he would find the charmers of his visions. Was it possible that the Austrian Fanny was more Spanish than those from whom she had learnt her entrancing Cachucha? It was not until he reached Andalucía that his cravings were satisfied — his aspirations more than realized. In Sevilla, Cádiz, and Málaga the priestesses of the bolero were endowed with all the fire and grace that he had anticipated.

The moral of his pilgrimage is that, even ninety years ago, what was loosely called Spanish dancing was really the art of this one province, the Roman Betica, El Andalus of the Moors. The same statement is very largely true of music, the rhythms and tone-colour which are baldly labelled Spanish are in fact those of Andalucía. Although this province has influenced the rest of Spain the typical music of Galicia or Cataluña possesses quite a different imprint.

The one exception to the statement that Spanish dancing is Andalusian dancing writ large, is the Jota of Aragón. One might say that the outlook of the Aragonese is dominated by the twin cults of " la Virgen del Pilar " and the Jota; so much so that a jovial priest avowed that they were fallen angels, who, with their broken wings attempted to regain Heaven through the Jota.

Although still the recreation of a peasant population, the inclusion of variations of the ballet, such as pirouettes and cabrioles renversés, makes it most effective on the stage. The intensity and the nuances of Southern Spain are not even attempted, but the turns, the elevation, and the speed of the whole performance, impress any audience as being obviously difficult. As it is the dancing which is obviously difficult or dangerous that is usually rewarded with most applause in our theatres, the Jota is, of all Spanish dances, that most appreciated abroad. It is strong, hardy and athletic, with no pretension to grace, but with an atmosphere of robust humour. It is usually performed as a duet, and almost appears to be an endurance contest between the participants, who vie with each other in the vigour of their springs. The height of these springs is attested by the popular verse :

" Cada vez que te veo
Los cenojiles,
Se me ponen los ojos
Como candiles " *

* Every time I see your garters my eyes shine like candles.

There is no zapateado, as it is always danced in the rope-soled alpargatas which constitute the Aragonese footwear, but castanets supply a rhythmical accentuation and their rapid trill adds to the exhilarating effect.

Although closely akin to the Portugese in many respects, the Galicians do not resemble them in their dancing. In place of the sensual, lascivious, and fascinating Fado, beloved of Lisbon, the Galician peasant has his Muñeira, for which the musical inspiration is furnished by the gaita gallega or Galician bagpipe. Of the same type as the Muñeira, and also in 6/8 time, is the Gallegada, but both follow the normal type of folk-dance and are apparently rapidly disappearing.

The popular dancing of Vizcaya is in a far more flourishing state. The Basques are strongly race-conscious, and, in their desire to conserve their racial integrity, they carefully foster their traditional dances, which, although little studied before Iztueta's work in 1824, are of considerable antiquity. For at least two hundred years the principal example has been the Aurreku, so called from the first figure, which is largely a solo for the Aurreku or leader. Dancing, in an advanced sense, has to be content with a very subordinate part. The third figure, the Zortziko*, is interesting in that it is an example of 5/8 time. The music of the Aurreku is played upon an assortment of silbotia or

* In many districts the dance is known as the Zortziko.

flutes of various sizes, accompanied by tambours. Iztueta catalogued about thirty Basque dances, and many of them still exist, including some in which sticks or swords are used. Basque folk-dancers have appeared in London at the invitation of the English Folk Dance Society, and even a cursory inspection shows that they have several features in common with their one-time hosts.

Always a fertile soil in which to sow the seeds of separation, the Catalans resemble the Basques in having a language of their own. Even more jealously than their neighbours do they treasure their native usages. To them their Sardanas is a national asset of great value, and one which, emigrating to the Argentine, they still cultivate in their new home. This dance has undergone a great renaissance within recent years, and there would seem to be no risk of its disappearance. The music, in 6/8 time, is played by a Cobla, a band of musicians who beat a small drum with one hand, while at the same time contriving to play a rather shrill flute known as a fluviol. Like so many dances of this type it is danced by a very large number in a circle.

In conclusion we may roughly divide the dancing of Spain into two distinct classes. The first category embraces what can most conveniently be called community dances, in which everyone in the village possessing a sound pair of legs would expect to take part. Although of a picturesque nature, and of great value as an enjoyable recreation, they do not, pace the Folk-Dance enthusiast, demand any particular aptitude,

while any intensity of feeling would be laughably out of place. The limitations of the performers will prevent this type of dancing from deviating from its original and traditional form. Vizcaya and Cataluña appear now to be the richest districts in this respect, but it has been common in the past to all the provinces of the peninsula. In the second classification are grouped those dances which are essentially individualist, although they may often be danced by a couple, and, in some cases, by 2 or 4 pairs. The dances of this group are more of a theatrical nature, demanding a certain amount of preliminary tuition, or at any rate, practice, before they can be adequately performed; above all the dancer must be, as the Spanish say, one of those upon whom God has bestowed the gift. Although strongly traditional the far greater technical ability required for this type of dancing makes it more liable to innovation and change. The dancing of Andalucía belongs to this class, while, with the single exception of the Jota, that of the rest of Spain, exemplified by the Aurreku and the Sardanas, is typical community dancing.

On the province of Andalucía both the Phoenician and Roman civilisations left a deep imprint. There, too, the Arab empire endured long after the rest of the peninsula had been abandoned to the Christian. Through the ports of Cádiz and Sevilla this province experienced more strongly than the others the influence of the American colonies acquired during the sixteenth century. Still later the gypsies

found there a congenial home, where they settled in preference to the less tolerant North. All these factors combined to create in Southern Spain a soil particularly fertile in certain forms of artistic expression. It was of Andalusian girls that Martial wrote :

“ Nec de gadibus improbis puellae
Vibrarunt sine fine prurientibus
Lascivos docili turnari lumbros.”

This aptitude they have conserved until the present day and, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the history of their art is better documented than in the rather vague days of the Zarabanda, and the still more problematical beginnings in remote Gadir.

Andalucía has always been the fountain-head of the peninsular dance cult, but at one time its fashions were followed by the rest of Spain. The Zarabanda attained an even wider popularity, and although the Seguidillas never crossed the Pyrenees, forms of it were danced in many of the other provinces. Within the last two hundred years the increasing tendency has been for the rest of Spain to admire the dancing of the South, without attempting to imitate it.

Soon after 1700 a fresh name appears, the Fandango. Like almost all the dances of the pre-tango era it had a triple rhythm, but in tempo was apparently more brisk than the

rather measured Seguidillas. The oft-repeated fable of the Fandango being exhibited before a consistory court to debate its suitability as a recreation for the faithful, and the subsequent participation in the dance of the fascinated ecclesiastics, has helped to endow the dance with an undeserved aura of licentiousness. We say undeserved since Salillas considers the Fandango to have been essentially a noble dance. The vogue of this dance endured into the 19th century, and the name survives in the repertory of contemporary singers like the famous Cojo de Málaga, many of whose songs are called fandangos.

The degeneration of the Spanish Austrian line came to a melancholy end in the semi-idiocy of Philip the Bewitched, who, lacking an heir, willed his crown to the grandson of Louis XIV of France. An exemplary Bourbon, the new king could never forget his upbringing, and he did all in his power to foster French tastes in his new kingdom, a policy which was whole-heartedly continued by his successors. The majority of the upper classes imitated the French aristocracy to the best of their ability until the Peninsular War drove them headlong into the arms of the people whose traditions they had denied. After the final laying of the Napoleonic bogey, the tendency reappeared, and, though less strong, continued to depreciate the popular music of Spain.

The despised national cults had one fervent defender for

whom every lover of Spanish dancing must feel a very warm regard. This was Isa Zamácola, a Basque notary, who wrote under the pseudonym of Don Preciso. An appropriate name, for no suspicion of vagueness restrained the gusto with which he belaboured both "those stupid Frenchmen" * and also the "indecent jumps and capers" † which were being grafted onto the national dances. Italian bombast was another subject on which he enlarged with a directness and a pungency rivalling that of an English pamphleteer of the early eighteenth century. He entertained a very special affection for the classic Seguidillas, of which he painted a piquant and spirited picture in the introduction to his "Colección de las mejores coplas de Seguidillas, Tiranías y Polos."

The fact that Charles III came from the throne of Naples to that of Spain entailed an increase in the Italianization which had been encouraged by both his predecessors in the Spanish Bourbon house. It was inevitable that this tendency should be apparent in the next manifestation of the prolific Andalusian genius, and in the Bolero, interwoven with the integral native traits, we can easily discern the technique of the ballet. Sebastián Cerezo, a famous dancer of Cádiz, invented this dance in 1780. Its name is derived from the verb volar, to fly, frequently written bolar in the eighteenth century, and refers to the lightness or "ballon" which the performer was expected to show in the various figures.

* "Aquellos franceses estúpidos"

† "Indecentes saltos y cabriolas"

Owing to its nature it was frequently, but not always, danced in heelless shoes. Although it included the springing so deplored by the Basque purist, the dignity of the Spaniard is never lacking; if ever the national character seems in danger of being submerged beneath Italian virtuosity, the abrupt "bien parado" instantly recalls the Iberian savour. This sudden pause, the body slightly twisted, as if supporting itself upon the protruded hip of the back leg, the front leg bent at the knee and turned out, the arms in opposition with one crossed in front of the chest and the other arched over the head, expresses so strongly the decision and the pride of the race.

The Bolero was danced either liso, by a single performer, or robado, when two dancers appeared alternately to dazzle the audience with their skill. There is no doubt that, more than any other dance of Andalucian origin, it called for a schooling in the technique of the ballet, and the aficionados who now discuss the science of the bull ring, its verónicas and its navarras, were then equally at home in the nomenclature of the classroom. "Máteme Vd. la cuadrana!" - "Hágame el bien parado!" were the cries with which they exhorted the performers to display some favourite treasure of their art. But despite this technique, it counted as nothing without the feeling, the sincerity, and the purpose, which were also demanded. The Spaniard has always found more satisfaction in emotion than in pleasure. To satisfy a native audience in the Bolero,

just as much as in the earlier Seguidillas, the dancer had to be one who, "in the structure and make-up of her person was compounded more of air and fire than of earth and water." The flame had always animated Spanish dancing, and to it the Bolero added the attraction of elevation. Even so, in the first flush of enthusiasm, the new dance tended to become too much "un baile de pies" * and, led by the Murcian Requejo, a reaction ensued which made it less violent, and, by somewhat retarding the tempo, restored its original majesty.

The fame of the Bolero eventually crossed the Pyrenees, and, probably for the first time, Spanish dancers were applauded by the sophisticated audiences of Paris. Théophile Gautier wrote a poem inspired by the art of La Petrará, and generally acted as artistic godfather to the new fashion. To possess the cachet demanded by a Parisian public it was at this time only necessary to have a Peninsular. The popular composers of the day, Auber, Weber, and Delibes, included Boleros in their light operas, and it was an offshoot of this all-conquering dance that became to the French what Le Cygne was to Pavlova.

Among the dances which were developed in Spain soon after the Bolero, the names survive of the Zorongo and the Olé. Richard Ford, the writer of that classic of guide books, saw the latter when it was at the height of its

* A dance of the feet.

popularity, but, although generally sympathetic to the Spanish temperament, he was unable whole-heartedly to admire this manifestation of its taste. It was one of the earliest dances to show gypsy influence, and of the serpentine, quivering movements he remarks that "the sight which excites the Spaniard to frenzy rather disgusts an English spectator."

It is during the same period, the early decades of the nineteenth century, that the word zapateado becomes very prominent. Derived from zapato — a shoe — it is the name given to the rhythmic harmony which a Spanish dancer builds up with the tapping and beating of the heels and soles of her shoes. Most dances contain a certain proportion of this footwork, and during the last hundred years, it has played an ever-increasing part in Spanish choreography. A male dancer will not use any step which might involve a suspicion of weakness or effeminacy on his part, and this restriction leads him to place great reliance on forms of zapateado.*

The incessant civil wars do not seem to have interfered with the evolution of Spanish dancing, and it is probable that 1870 can be taken as the culminating point of the classic style. This school has continued to produce professional

* This trait is sufficiently strong in Spanish dancers to appease even the most masculine. Escudero says: "If I heard one single person say that my dancing was in any way effeminate, I would never dance again."

dancers of the first rank, but even the most sanguine observer admits that the number of those who practise the art not as a profession, but through pure affection, has rapidly declined. The spread of modern fashions has been an unmitigated evil for the amateurs of Spain which José Otero bitterly laments: "If, before 1870, one had said to a girl of the Triana, or San Bernardo or La Macarena 'Let us dance a waltz,' she would have said 'What nonsense' — and it was not only in these quarters that it was considered almost an insult to dance "por lo fino" as they called it . . . gradually the youth of the city was attracted by the dances of society, and to-day there is not one of them who does not know how to slide her feet along the floor, having lost those classic fiestas which it was a joy to behold and to spend an hour among girls of spirit and charm." * To pass muster at these gatherings of enthusiasts it was necessary for the participant to dance the Fandango, the Bolero, and the Panaderos. To-day people are undoubtedly prepared to go to much trouble to attain that proficiency in sport which is one of the passports to success in contemporary social life. In Andalucía, fifty years ago, the lower classes attached an equal importance to the dances which shared their interest with "sangre y arena,"† and the art to which they were devoted was one of incontestable aesthetic and emotional value.

Even then the Bolero and the Fandango were being re-

* Tratado de Bailes.

† Blood and sand.

legated to an inferior position as being somewhat old-fashioned; this was inevitable, for a folk-art must change if it is not to become a dead and empty survival of the letter without any informing spirit. National art is so essentially a spontaneous and natural growth that nothing provides a more depressing spectacle than a conscious attempt to recreate as a living form an archaic usage, which has long ceased to be a normal element in the lives of the people.

The Seguidillas, whose arrival had been chronicled by Mateo Alemán nearly three hundred years before, and, who had, at the same time, rashly prophesied their supersession by newer fancies, still held the field in various forms. The Seguidillas Manchegas, now almost forgotten, was one in which considerable technical ability was required, notably in the third copla, when pirouettes of two or more turns were executed, according to the capacity of the dancer. In this dance lightness and accuracy of footwork were the primary considerations, and the arms did not play the important part which they assume in the pure Andalucian style. Through the rather unusual insistence upon the correct placing of the feet, this dance was considered by the old masters as an excellent means of training young dancers, for Spanish maestros have usually imparted their teaching through actual dances. Such a procedure seems hopelessly crude to the modern idea, and for the ballet it would be ludicrous, but with this highly individual art it certainly succeeded, and it is equally certain that the pupils would never have submitted to large doses of preliminary technique.

A gypsy member of this family is the Seguidillas Gitanas, taken more slowly than the Manchegas, and of which sentiment and feeling are more characteristic than pedal dexterity. The music of the Seguidillas is distinguished by a sombre, pulsating beat with a curiously distributed accent which has tempted many of the modern Spanish composers to evoke its strange atmosphere.

The dance which has best survived this vanished Golden Age is that offshoot of the Seguidillas group known as the Sevillanas, which has always had its greatest following in the swarming Triana of Sevilla. Usually danced either by one or two couples, it is invariably accompanied by castanets, and the whole effect is one of animation and dignity, without the tension of the gypsy Seguidillas. Steps of elevation and batterie, bríceles and cuartas voladas, were included in the famous Sevillanas boleras, but the modern version is terre-à-terre, built up largely on the paseo de Sevillanas and the pasada de Sevillanas. The latter is the step used when the two partners cross over to change places, a process which nearly always coincides with the same two bars in the music; in all dances of the Seguidillas class this changing over is of great importance and regular occurrence. One may say that the figures are related to those of the Italian school, but all very much modified, especially in avoiding any extreme movement of the legs.

Fifty years ago, these noble dances, Panaderos, Sevillanas

and Peteneras constituted not only the repertory of the artist, but also the amusement and relaxation of the amateur. At the numerous reunions and fiestas the Andalucian aficionados gathered together, and through their dances they satisfied that desire for the co-ordination of accent and movement which is one of the fundamental elements in the human complex. And in doing so they also ministered to their aesthetic needs by developing dance forms of an unsurpassed beauty. Looking back on his long and eventful life, Havelock Ellis decided that the highest manifestations of beauty he had seen were the slow movements of certain Spanish dances. These dances were without esoteric significance, but in them is to be found that purging of the emotions which the Greeks held to be the essence of drama.

Though this dancing emphasised, so clearly and so repeatedly, the body and the glory of the flesh, it cannot be dismissed as erotic. Provocative though the gestures might be, especially when gypsy influence preponderated, the suggestion was only in the nature of a condiment, and the sense of dignity innate in the Spanish, their feeling for style, preserved them from vulgarity. Neither was the dancer attempting to inflame the passions of a languid audience. The spectators, occupied with the rhythmic hand-clapping of the jaleo, felt that they were co-operating in the drama, and this relationship raised the performance to another plane. But it cannot be too clearly understood that the Spanish dance glorifies the flesh as well as the spirit. By

the flouncing of her skirt as she flicks her foot from the floor in a jerezana, the bailarina seems to indicate with fleeting touches the joy in her heart, and the pride she feels in the control of her suave movements.

Spanish dancers, both flamenco and classic, are distinguished by the carriage of the trunk; one notices instantly the manner in which the stomach is contracted, and the lower part of the back arched. Curiously enough, it is an anatomical fact, first established by Duchenne in 1866, that in Spanish women the spine is more curved than in other races, as if a slight pressure had been exerted at either extremity. With reason Havelock Ellis says that this "gives the characteristic mark to her bearing and carriage, while it emphasises much that is most significant in Spanish dancing." Proof of the importance attached to this part of the body is provided by the practice, common to both sexes, of wearing garments which fit like a skin from the hips to the chest. The sociologist Salillas, who studied the gypsy dance with sympathetic insight, advances the theory that every type of dancing centres itself upon a different part of the body, and that from this location its character is derived. He takes as an example, Egyptian dancing, the basis of which he considers to be the abdomen. The dancing of his own country he believes to be dorsal, having its focal point in the lower part of the back.

The dancing of Andalucía avoids the acrobatic. In any

case it is highly improbable that these dancers would submit to the daily toil of bar and centre, the necessary preliminary to the ballet, and, even if they would, this discipline would rob them of their spontaneity and vital humanity. "Since they work little, and do not subject themselves to the terrible loosening exercises which make a dancing-class like a chamber of torture, they avoid that racehorse skinniness which invests our ballets with something uncanny and too anatomical . . . no grands ronds de jambe, none of those écarts which make a woman look like a pair of opened compasses." * Théophile Gautier drew this comparison many years ago, and studying the pictures of the étoiles of the Second Republic, one certainly notices that "something uncanny and too anatomical."

The qualities which impressed the same poet so strongly and favourably in the male dancers of the peninsula, are still encountered in the few remaining members of that dwindling class. When the premier danseur of the ballet has consummated some miracle which seems to disprove whatever now remains of the laws of gravitation, he looks confidently to the audience for the applause he has undoubtedly earned. About the highly technical operatic dancing of the pre-Diaghilev era there was always an unfortunate suggestion of the trapeze act. Such a mood is completely foreign to the Spaniard, who practically ignores his audience. When he is dancing with a girl his eyes

* Voyage en Espagne.

seldom leave her, and if he is alone on the stage he seems to be dancing for his own satisfaction.

With the twentieth century the dancing of Spain fell upon hard times. The passion for modernity which followed the humiliations of the war with the United States despised such customs as part of the obscurantism and reaction which were clogging the wheels of what the innovators firmly hoped to be Progress. Gradually dancing was relinquished to professionals, and people were content merely to applaud what they once had practised. In their native city the Sevillanas are still danced at the Feria, but they seem an isolated incident, testifying to a fading glory. There is, however, one class of the population amongst whom there is little tendency to forego this heritage, one class which is conserving its vitality by the addition of new modes and fresh rhythms. The gypsies of Spain, los gitanos, have, of late years, played an increasingly large part in the dancing of their country. Although the classic style has decayed through its partial abandonment by the Spanish themselves, the newer or gypsy branch is still a living art.

In the course of their wanderings there is not a country in Europe in which the gypsies have not pitched their tents, but, in all their pilgrimages, they have never found, except in Hungary, a more congenial home than Southern Spain. Between the temperament of the gitano and that of the Andalucian, bearing deep down the imprint of his long

contact with oriental fatalism, there exists a fundamental sympathy. Indolent, impulsive, subject to alternate moods of extreme joy and utter melancholy, the races have much in common. Although the Spanish have always despised the nomads as ignorant, shiftless, and, despite their professed Christianity, as almost heathen, in Andalucía there have always been some who have shared the gypsy longings, the gypsy regrets.

Whether the gypsies are creators or merely apt imitators has long been a question of dispute among those interested in their mysterious, drably romantic history. Liszt was disposed to attribute to them the creation of the national music of Hungary, certainly a sphere in which they have excelled. "No feast without the gypsies," runs the proverb. More recent critics are inclined to regard them, not as creators, but as a race skilled in acquiring and transforming whatever appeals to them in the music of the people among whom they live. With regard to Spain, this certainly seems a very just view of the matter. The sorrow implicit in Andalucian music, its broken cadences, struck a responsive chord in the gitanos, and they enriched the cult with many twists of their ingenious fantasy. Gypsy or flamenco dancing, although it presents many differences from the classic style, must not be regarded as an entirely separate entity. In it those of gypsy blood are often pre-eminent, but it is admired and danced by the non-gypsy as well.

Borrow studied the gypsies very closely and, since he

mentions them but seldom, we must conclude that their music and dancing did not greatly impress him. Possibly his almost professional interest in robbery, horse-coping, and "the affairs of Egypt" left him little time for the lighter distractions of gypsy life. In any case, the only dance mentioned in his vocabulary of their dialect is the Romalis, identical with the Olé of the Spanish. Probably the slight rise in the social scale which the gitanos experienced during the first half of the nineteenth century brought them into a more human contact with the ordinary Spaniard, so that, shortly after Borrow's travels, they would begin to be influenced by the Cante Hondo.

The gypsies now speak a corrupt Spanish, in the inflections of which philologists profess to find remnants of Romani influence. Their physical characteristics are darkness of skin, small hands and feet, very white teeth, and eyes of great lustre. In the majority of these respects they seem to intensify traits also possessed by the Andalusian. The frequency of unions between Gypsy and Spaniard, and the standard of chastity prevalent among the girls, have been much debated, among the most enthusiastic investigators having been the aforesaid representative of the Bible Society, George Borrow, who arrived at conclusions highly satisfactory to the champions of Romani morality. Prosper Mérimée, who considered that he was better able to conduct such researches than a person of semi-ecclesiastical position, hints that he did not find their virtue so inexpugnable. This

interesting question is not of purely academic moment, but has also some bearing on certain aspects of gypsy dancing.

The type of Andalucian music which appealed to the gitanos was the Cante Hondo, so called from its tragic character.* It has been said that, in Almería or Málaga, "Love rarely forgets to go hand-in-hand with her dear sister Death," and such a mood was particularly sympathetic to the race of outcasts, who applied themselves to seasoning it still more to their own taste.

In time the word flamenco came to be applied to the forms of music and dancing to which the gypsies devoted themselves. We may say that Cante Flamenco is built up on the basis of the older Cante Hondo of Andalucía. This term flamenco, first noted in 1871, is one whose history has provided Spanish philologists with many hours of pleasant, but inconclusive, research. Whatever its derivation, the word has for years been used to designate the dancing and music which are so much in favour in the Triana of Sevilla and on the Sacro Monte in Granada.

The three dances which constitute the nucleus of the modern flamenco school are the Tango, the Garrotín, and the Farruca. The earlier dances of Andalucía had invariably been in $3/4$ and $3/8$ time, with occasional passages in $6/8$; one distinct novelty of this group lies in the fact that all three are in $2/4$. How the fresh rhythm was introduced is

* Hondo = Deep = Tragic

uncertain, but it is possible that it was a result of the contact with the Spanish American colonies, probably the island of Cuba, the possession of which prolonged the once-mighty Empire almost into the twentieth century. This possibility is supported by the fact of the tango having first acquired its popularity in Cádiz, a port particularly susceptible to colonial influence. When Emmanuel Chabrier visited Spain in 1882, among the dances which so impressed him with their intensity and sincerity, was the tango, which had then been the favourite dance of the lower classes of Cádiz for some years. It cannot be too often stated that the only things common both to the tango of the Argentine and that of Spain are the name and the time signature. With these exceptions the two are utterly different.

The Tango is the epitome of the gypsy dance. It is usually, but not necessarily, danced by a woman, and for it the dancer frequently wears the *sombrero cordobés*, the flat-brimmed hat affected by the Andalusian, which she manipulates during her outbursts of *taconeó*.* In flamenco dancing far less ground is covered than in the classic, and for that reason it is completely unsuited to big theatres, where it is almost impossible to create the necessary intimate contact with the onlookers. *Zapateado* and *taconeó* play a very large part in the tango and a never-ending satisfaction is to be derived from contrasting the rapid clicking and beating of the heels with the slow, sinuous working of the arms. The

* Heel tapping

arm movements are a vital feature of the gypsy dance, especially for a woman, and in their convolutions she seeks to express the vague, unutterable longings implanted in her heart. The hands, too, curve and turn in circles from the wrist, as if the all-pervading rhythm flowed even to her very extremities. Castanets are occasionally used in flamenco, but it is more usual to replace them with the snapping fingers and the staccato clapping of the hands.

The end, when it comes, is sudden and abrupt. No preparation, no working up to a climax in the usual theatrical manner. The sudden silence strikes us like a knife, giving the impression of a fragment that has been sharply torn off.

In some examples of tango flamenco there appears to be an element of obscenity, largely owing to the movements of the stomach. Arthur Symons says that "it is always on a doubtful verge and thus gains its extraordinary fascination." It is in this connection that the question of gypsy virtue is of more than academic interest. The general, but not unanimous, opinion appears to be that, when the dance is over, the gitanas are not so approachable as the ingenuous observer might have concluded. Richard Ford says that in his time they were, for non-gypsy spectators, like iced punch at a rout. In any case, we see from the dancing of Vicente Escudero that flamenco dancing can dispense entirely with the erotic element, and when it does glorify sensuality,

it does so in a manner so naïve and unashamed that one does not notice the coarseness but only the joy and the ardour.

Similar to the Tango, but of a much more recent origin, is the Garrotín, in which the use of the arms and the fluttering, trembling hands are unforgettable features. This, too, is more usually a girl's dance. Men nearly always prefer the Farruca, of which Escudero is the great exponent. Although bearing a family likeness to much that had gone before, both these dances have grown up within the last twenty-five years, partly through the work of the gypsy Faíco. It has been suggested that the music of the Farruca is inspired by the folk-tunes of Galicia, the district that Morales considers to be musically the richest and least known of all Spain.

Not all the flamenco dances are in 2/4 time. Exceptions are the Fandanguillos, the Bulerías and the Alegrías, although these dances are sometimes classed as semi-flamenco, and they certainly are on the debatable ground that lies between the two styles. When the Alegrías is danced by a man it usually takes the form of a zapateado, but a girl will introduce steps like the jerezana from the classic school. It is danced in the long, many frilled skirt and, with the frequent use of pito and palmada, is an exhilarating spectacle and one most fitted to display the charm of a young and beautiful dancer. The Bulerías shows the influence of the

Tango, transposed to another rhythm, and, like it, is usually danced by women.

A striking phenomenon of the past decade has been the introduction and, despite the resistance to its charms of the more conservative "cantaoras" such as "La Niña de los Peines," the subsequent overwhelming popularity of the Fandanguillos. The pulsating 3/4 rhythm has been adopted for dancing, and it is the only gitano dance for which castanets are indispensable; in general, the gypsies, especially the men, tend to despise the palillos as a meretricious adjunct to serious dancing. The Fandanguillo as at present danced, with the frequent développés, is, however, too redolent of the music hall to be considered an unadulterated expression of the gypsy temperament.

A form of gypsy dancing especially associated with the caves on the Sacro Monte at Granada is the Zambra, which manifests, alike in its name and in the manner of its presentation, a hankering after oriental models. Musical observers state that they find an increasing surface orientalism in flamenco music, a tendency which is apparent in this dance.

Other styles which belong to the Cante Hondo but are much affected by the gypsy are the Malagueñas and the Soleares. The former, with its derivatives, named after their native towns, has long been sung in Andalucía. These offshoots, Granadinas, Rondeñas, Tarantas, Cartageneras, Murcianas, are all very similar and in each the

time is 3/4 with interspersed passages in 6/8.

In general the gypsies have selected what has attracted them in the Andalucian Cante Hondo and from these elements they have evolved the Cante Flamenco that is now associated with them, but it is pedantic to insist upon a rigid distinction between forms so complementary. The dances in which the flamenco style is seen at its best are the Tango, the Farruca, and the Alegrías, but, especially with an unsophisticated performer, it is pathetically ineffective in an unsympathetic atmosphere. In the magic hands and feet of Vicente Escudero it can overcome the initial revulsion that is aroused in us by the strange and bizarre, but to a normal gypsy the support of a Cuadro Flamenco is a necessity. That half-circle, with its thrumming guitars, its wailing singers, and its seated dancers awaiting their turn, induces the exaltation and loss of self-consciousness which alone can carry the dancer into the realms of rhythmic intoxication. When the onlookers belong to the same class as the artists, they, too, will supplement the efforts of the troupe. In its home, flamenco dancing is "the visible embodiment of an emotion in which every spectator takes an active and a helpful part; it is a vision evoked by the spectators themselves, and upborne on the continuous waves of rhythmical sound which they generate." *

The character of the popular music of Southern Spain

* Havelock Ellis : "The Soul of Spain"

shows clearly the influence of the instrument for which it is intended, and which is, especially for flamenco, the most effective means of conveying its metallic tang. The normal gypsy player, often unable to read a note of music, treats the guitar in a manner very different from that of the great contemporary virtuouse Miguel Llobet or Andrés Segovia. "When played for flamenco" says Wyndham Tryon, "the guitar has a primitive, barbaric sound, slightly harsh and nasal, which can be used with great dramatic effect, but when the instrument is used in other music, such as Bach or Chopin, it has a pleasant, sentimental but too sweet sound." The strong, arresting tone-colour is partly obtained by tuning the guitar so that it is not perfectly balanced. In the hands of a sympathetic player the buzzing, sobbing, almost acrid chords have a unique power of evocation. In moments of rhythmic ecstasy he punctuates this music with staccato tappings of his thumb on the board.* In a few moments the guitar conjures up a curious dramatic atmosphere and, almost instantaneously, it can travel from the depths of slow, sad musing to the heights of anticipatory joy. These rapid transitions from one emotional extreme to the other are typical both of the popular dance and its music. There is in the latter an absence of cadence that intensifies its dramatic power since it makes it more a living thing, and less a mechanical development whose end can be foreseen. In the same way that the dancer syncopates

* On the authority of Mr. Jan Gordon, in moments of the highest ecstasy, an especially ingenious *falseta* will cause him to spit upon the floor to show his appreciation of his own genius.

his hand-clapping and slapping against the clicking of his heels, so, too, in the music there is the conflict of strong, decided rhythms. And, especially in Cante Hondo and its flamenco offshoot, the contours are broken up and adorned with innumerable wavering embroideries of gypsy fancy.

Straightforward melody with regular development has never been a feature of this music, and, from its association with the guitar, an instrument of restricted melodic expression, it is natural that its tendency should always be to emphasise rhythm at the expense of tune. In this preference it illustrates a peculiarly Spanish trait, the craving for loud, occasionally strident sounds, which sometimes approach the border line between music and noise. Of the fiestas, at which dancing is found in its natural atmosphere, Salillas said:— “The fiesta is noise, noise everywhere and in every manner; everything gives forth sound. The muscles of the arm appear to transmit their movements of extension, contraction, rising, and descending, to the fingers which crack like castanets; the muscles of the legs are not satisfied until the taconeo proclaims their energy. Hence the dance called zapateado and there is no dance without zapateado, just as there is none without jaleo.” *

CHAPTER II.

ARGENTINA AND ESCUDERO

To many lovers of dancing in this country Argentina may be just another of the multitude of Spanish dancers who are differentiated only by their romantic names; to some, perhaps, even her name may be unknown. Certainly she danced at the Coliseum for a short season five years ago, but she did not seem to arouse more than a quite mild enthusiasm. In France or Germany, however, it is probably her name which, with that of Pavlova, occurs most readily to the general public when dancing is the subject of discussion. In Paris, her great stronghold, journalists describe her as the Pavlova of Spanish dancing. All comparisons are odious, but this one does not seem inapt, despite the very different conditions under which these two artists appear. The performance of the great Russian is frequently assisted by a partner, often by a corps de ballet; her dance is inspired by the rhythm and tone-colour of an orchestra; sometimes an appropriate setting helps to transport the audience into that world of illusion which is the aim of the classic ballet. In Paris, Argentina has enjoyed similar advantages, but her greatest successes are attained under very different circumstances. She takes the stage alone before the back-cloth of a concert hall, often with only a piano and her own incredible castanets to evoke the glamour of Sevilla and Córdoba. No occupation would be more futile than that of attempting to assign to great artists their exact placing in a problematical order of merit, as if they were "aces" of the tennis world,

but perhaps an enthusiast may be pardoned for claiming for Argentina a place among those dancers whom their contemporaries designate as "great," and whose art is not forgotten when they have long ceased to tread the stage. Her achievement may be compared to that of Ruth Draper in another sphere; the dancer, too, retains the attention and enthusiasm of her audience from her initial entry until the final dropping of the curtain.

To a certain extent her art is the product of her race — the national soul seeking to express half-realised urges and longings. "Dancing is something more than an amusement in Spain — it is part of the solemn ritual which enters into the whole life of the people. It expresses their very spirit."* It would be a tragedy for Spain and for the world, if this intensely national heritage were to be submerged beneath the tide of Americanization and industrialism which flows so strongly in modern civilisation. Even sixteen years ago, in his "Tratado de Bailes," Otero was lamenting that, in those degenerate days, frequently men were lacking, so that the Sevillanas had to be danced entirely by girls.

No one has done more than La Argentina to establish and to enhance the prestige of the national genius. "Rares sont les artistes élus par la destinée et par leur vocation pour incarner, à une époque donnée, les caractères distinctifs de leur race et de leur conception de la beauté — et cela d'une façon si complète et si significative que leur nom suffise à désigner toute une manière d'être." † In many countries

* Havelock Ellis in "The Soul of Spain."

† Andre Levinson in "La Argentina"

Argentina has been the ambadress both of her own art and of the music of the modern Spanish composers — Albéniz, Granados, and de Falla. She is the “Âme dansante” of both old and new Spain.

Argentina has stylised and adapted the national dances. She avoids the occasional garishness and crudity of the unsophisticated flamenco performers, in the same way that she does not share their frequent enthusiasm for shawls of such wildly emphatic colouring. Carl van Vechten wrote that : “Against these rude gypsies the refined grace and Goyaesque elegance of La Argentina stand forth in high relief.” The work of the gitana is a living marvel and a thing of vivid beauty, but Argentina reaches another plane; it is a fact of vital importance that, in this process of refinement, she has sacrificed but little of the intensity which is inseparable from the dancing of her country. “Its ideal is inner emotion, rhythmical stability, ecstasy.” * “Tienes más sal que un salero” † is an ejaculation with which an Andalucian aficionado is reputed to encourage a favourite performer; to no one could the compliment be more justly applied than to Argentina.

Her dancing is pervaded by that spirit of nobility and natural dignity which stamps even the deportment of the

* Pedro Morales

† It does not translate very elegantly. “You contain more salt than a salt cellar.”

great Spanish dancer. Of Pastoria Imperio it was said that she had discovered, or had received as a gift from God, a new art — the art of walking. In an impassioned and voluptuous moment the dancer appears to offer herself body and soul, but the carriage of the slim body, the superbly held chin, show that something still is withheld, and that to nothing does she yield but to the demands of her own personality.

Antonia Mercé was born in Buenos Aires, the daughter of a Castillian father and an Andalucian mother. From the country of her birth, the silver republic, she has chosen her name, La Argentina. Her father was connected with the Royal Opera House in Madrid, and she herself was trained in the ballet at that institution before devoting herself entirely to the many aspects of Spanish dancing. Her art is built on a solid foundation of technique, but it is a technique which never obtrudes itself. Her dancing has a quality of being at once spontaneous and inevitable. The spectator feels that she is dancing as the music prompts her, and yet the slightest movement is so indissolubly wedded to the rhythm and colour that no alternative is conceivable. In adapting the traditional dances she has retained the rhythmical complexity and the irregularity of form, which help to give to Spanish music its perennial freshness. That music, whether of the people, or whether the work of a more sophisticated composer, does not suffer from the exaggerated reverence for phrases of either eight or

sixteen bars which tends to make so much dance music a little too obvious. Some modernists experience no difficulty in avoiding the obvious, indeed it might be their main pre-occupation, but, to the non-professional ear, they seem to avoid rhythm with equal ease. The atmosphere of the vibrant guitar suffuses all Spanish dance music and the underlying beat is seldom wanting.

As with Pavlova, "steps" do not play an inordinately large part in her work. Naturally she uses them, but she has many other means of externalising the music. Her arms move with a velvety softness in which there is no suspicion of weakness. Her finger tips invite and repel, but there is always latent strength in the slow, snake-like convolutions, which, when combined with that disturbing taconeo, seem to suggest something unutterable by other means. A movement of the chin, the relaxation of a knee, a sudden glance, all serve to add significance to the music. Devoid of theatricality or blatant showmanship, these nuances seldom pass unnoticed by her audience.

The sudden glance is one of her most effective weapons. She is not an abstract dancer, content to leave everything to the movement of her limbs while her face is void of expression in a manner more suited to the game of poker than to the art of dancing. Argentina's face and her suggestive eyes, "those clear green eyes that shine like two drops of Valencian absinthe,"* mirror and amplify every

* Blasco Ibanez describing Neleta in "Cañas y Barro."

mood that the music arouses. At times it seems as if inner emotion were about to overwhelm her. Then, at a flash, comes that inimitable smile which combines an almost youthful innocence with the more knowing humour which comes from experience.

Her power of characterisation is well displayed in the humorous and ironic "Lagarterana" in which she portrays the courtship of a naïve peasant girl. The simple child of the soil basks in the supposed favour of her swain. All moves happily to its appointed end. Then a horrid doubt assails her as to his sincerity and her dreams come tumbling down in ruins. As she dances, so significant and yet so unforced are her gestures, that one can almost see the object of her affections beside her on the stage. Another example is her famous tour-de-force to Valverde's music, "La Corrida" in which we are presented with an epitomised bullfight — the procession through the streets of the matadors, spoilt children of the Hispanic world, the thronging crowds who press to their places in sol or sombra, the entry of the bull, the moment when the banderillero rises proudly to his full height before placing his darts in the way that tradition describes, up to the culminating point of the ritual when the espada administers the death-blow.

The Tango of the Triana, the classic Bolero of 1840, the twitching Rumba brought from Cuba in the days when that island still testified to Spain's once great colonial empire

— all come within her province. There are, too, the creations which are not so closely related to an actual dance of the people, but which are partly Argentina's expression of the racial temperament. Obvious examples of this are her famous dances to the Córdoba of Albéniz, and to the fifth *Danza Española* of Granados. In neither of these dances is there any indication of the subject, but they are built up of unbroken, ever-moving lines which pass through attitudes that seem to exploit to the uttermost degree the poignant loveliness of the body. As she slowly brings both her arms up from her side and arches them over her head, her castanets emphasising this unfolding with a graduated crescendo, the line of her body, of her proud head, and of her smoothly curving arms creates a picture whose beauty is as perfect as any that human æsthetics can imagine. Perhaps at these moments she is not exclusively Spanish, for she represents a romantic, unattainable ideal common to all mankind. In Córdoba the atmosphere is one of reflection and gentle melancholy; as she sways slowly across the stage in that large white crinoline with its three rows of black lace, she seems to be expressing sorrow, but a sorrow coupled with resignation. The music of Granados evokes a similar mood, but this time the meditation is interrupted by recurrent vain attempts to break free from some overpowering force.

From such an atmosphere it is a wide stretch to the more primitive, direct, realistic world of the gypsy, but it is one

which Argentina can compass. In *El Amor Brujo*, to the insistent rhythm of de Falla's Fire music, she is the flamenca endeavouring, by sorcery and incantation, to appease the jealous spirit of the dead lover. The strident beating of her heels echoes the anguish and foreboding in her heart; then, coming down the stage with swift, soft steps she stamps once and draws herself erect. Anxiously she fans the glow in the brazier; she encourages it with the nervous snapping of her fingers, the recurrent hissing between her clenched teeth. Gradually a more hopeful strain insinuates itself into the music. As it becomes stronger and then dominant, the load of fate is lifted from the shoulders of the gitana, and in the final phase she becomes like a child, transported by triumphant relief and joy. Some Spaniards consider that Argentina is unable fully to exploit the gypsy style, and there is no doubt that she is primarily a classic dancer. Possibly she has certain inhibitions which prevent her from being completely possessed by the enraged fury and ardour which seizes the flamenca when she dances her *Farruca* or her *Alegrías*, but, just as de Falla's music satisfactorily embodies the popular *Cante Hondo*, so, too, Argentina gives us a powerful, if conscious, impression of the gypsy *Candelas*.

When indulging in the universal pastime of lauding past ages the Spanish say that to-day only two persons can make the castanets speak — the old Maestro Otero in Sevilla, and La Argentina. In her hands they cease to be merely a method of sustaining or accentuating the rhythm; they

ripple through the gamut of human emotions. Invitation, joy, satiety, and anger chase each other through the mind of the listener under the influence of those inspired pieces of wood. She realises, too, that, great as is the value of sound, a timely silence is equally significant. She stops abruptly — her costume, agitated by previous movement, settles to her body in lines of incredible beauty. Her castanets die with the music. The atmosphere is tense; one feels the presence of powerful forces. As she slowly glides into motion and the purring, clicking castanets sing again the song of old Spain, the spectator realises that he has seen one of the most beautiful sights that the modern stage has to offer.

Sometimes her performances have been given in surroundings hardly conducive to complete success. Pure Spanish dancing, shorn of stage tricks, does not blend very happily with the normal music-hall programme, least of all in an alien country. When the curtain has just eclipsed a back-chat comedian, it is difficult for the dancer to evoke in the audience the atmosphere which is essential to the full realisation of her art. The success of the Gómez Trio has shown us that the peasant Jota of Aragón, with its bewildering rapidity and its strong elevation, is effective even in such a milieu. The dancing of Southern Spain with its complete freedom from acrobatics is rather out of the picture; nevertheless it was in such uncongenial surroundings that the art of Argentina was first displayed to foreign audiences.

In the cafés of Sevilla or Málaga the spectators participate in the rhythm of the performance; the strident chorus of "Anda! Anda hija! Olé! Olé! Qué gracia!" together with the syncopated hand-clapping, form an ever-present background. The supreme artistry of Argentina can convey the idea and the glamour of her race without these stimulants. All that is peculiar to that strange world, the stronghold of tradition, as well as the basic emotions common to all mankind, are suggested to us by her insidious castanets, by her slender coiling arms, by her proud body. The onlookers, whatever their nationality, feel an emotional bond which unites them to the enchantress whose movements weave patterns round the throbbing music. A writer in "Die Dame" illustrated this rather happily: "I have seen elderly English ladies who, as they took their seats, reminded me of the dolls that, as a child, I was allowed to have only on Sundays, they were so bedecked with curls and little flowers. But when Argentina danced all was forgotten. Down tumbled the flowers and the curls, shaken from their place by their wild applause. So fell, too, the monocles of the blameless "gentlemen," who, disregarding all correctness, thundered on the floor with their walking sticks."

Without this unity of performer and audience Spanish dancing is unable to realise to the full its great potentialities. Without it we may look in vain for that sal, that vital savour, which is one of its most valuable qualities. Two

tendencies are unduly prominent in modern art. That which is intended for popular appeal normally suffers from a more than Transatlantic sentimentality, while Bloomsbury and Chelsea are too often the victims of pretentious bluff, the success of which is only possible through the prevalence of æsthetic snobbery. After a surfeit of either, the dancing of Spain, with its slightly acid humour and its slow beauty, comes like a voice from a saner world. Here is an art which will bear inspection "on all four sides"; an art with both a future and a past, the traditions of which stretch back through a crowded history, but which is still capable of development without losing its fundamental essence. Dancing is deep-rooted in the soil of Andalucía and in the Spanish blood. From the days when Cádiz supplied Imperial Rome with its dancers, the world has been continuously enriched by her achievements in this, the earliest, perhaps, of all the arts. In the line of classic Spanish dancers, that line recently adorned by the names of Amalia Molina and Pastora Imperio, the legitimate representative to-day is La Argentina, the Pavlova of Spain.

No view of the contemporary dancing of the Peninsula would be complete which did not include Argentina's twin star in the Hispanic firmament. This star, with whom there can be no question of rivalry, is her compatriot Vicente Escudero. Critics are frequently content to treat him as a male form of Argentina differing from her only in his sex. With good reason Escudero resents this sugges-

tion, since his art, besides being predominantly masculine, presents numerous obvious differences from that of his great fellow-artist. While any attempts to include them in the same genre argues a very superficial acquaintance with their dancing, one is, on the other hand, perfectly justified in regarding them as two different facets of the Spanish genius.

At the outset we are confronted by an important distinction. Argentina, as her name implies, was born in Buenos Aires of pure Spanish parentage, while, before everything, says Escudero, he is a gitano, a gypsy. The development of Spanish dancings divides into the two complementary streams — classic and flamenco, the former of which is now overshadowed by the modern rage for everything flamenco. To such an extent is there a demand for the art of the gypsy that in Madrid there is even a movement to produce flamenco opera. Naturally the classic and flamenco styles have greatly influenced each other so that some dances are compounded equally of both elements. It is only within comparatively recent years that flamenco dancing has assumed its present form. The Spanish teacher José Otero attributes this partly to the efforts of Faico, a gypsy of the Triana, who, after numerous unsuccessful attempts to earn a living, conceived the idea of arranging steps to gypsy music that had previously been used principally for singing. The dances with which he achieved fame more than 20 years ago included the Farruca and Garrotin. Undoubtedly dancing of a similar nature had been prevalent

among the gitanos of Southern Spain for a long time past, and Faíco's innovation probably lay in his giving a more distinct form to an art which had hitherto been rather lacking in that respect. At any rate it appears to have solved his economic problems for, writing six years later, Otero remarks that, meeting Faíco in the street, one would think him at least a New York banker. Originally despised owing to the low social status enjoyed by the gypsies, flamenco art is now, in the sphere of dancing, far more in the picture than its elder sister. Forty years ago a dancer was renowned for her performance of Peteneras or Panaderos, but to-day it is her Tango and Alegrías that bring her fame. Whereas Argentina is at her greatest in the classic style as she adapts it to suit her own genius, Escudero is pre-eminently flamenco.

The classic style owed something of its character to the half-forgotten influences transported from the birthplace of ballet via Naples and Madrid. It was, notably in the heyday of the Bolero, the early 19th century, emphatically of a theatrical character and this trait is noticeable in Argentina's work. Although Spanish "on all four sides," and although her every movement is suffused with temperament and "sal," she is consciously an artist, achieving the desired result by a stagecraft which is all the more effective for being well concealed. If the highest art is that which conceals art then Argentina has attained that lofty summit. But, almost from childhood, she has danced in theatres, while Escudero's

heels first thundered in village squares when, as a budding gypsy dancer, he wandered through Andalucía accompanied by a guitarrist with the requisite "hands of gold." Although he subsequently moved in more sophisticated circles, he is still almost as close to his native soil as in the days of his youthful pilgrimages. There is a complete absence of showmanship that is not only refreshing, but also, perhaps, more effective than the most ingenious combinations of that necessary evil. The rising curtain discloses a bare stage with a plain back-cloth, half white, half black. From the wings appears a rather diffident guitarrist carrying a chair and his guitar. Having apologetically seated himself he commences to strike chords on his instrument. From the opposite side Escudero strolls in, completely unconcerned. He stops by the player, and starts chatting to him. Soon he begins beating a rhythm with one foot while still leaning over his accompanist's chair. Then, apparently when the mood takes him, and no sooner, he starts to dance.

Other Spaniards have been blessed with incredible powers of rhythmic invention and have also manifested the same intensity in their dancing. But, especially with full blooded gitanos, they often confine themselves to one type of dance, usually the Farruca, and do not attempt any other. While adepts in their particular style, they would be completely nonplussed if required to show a series of contrasted dances. Others possess wonderful virtuosity in their footwork, in the nuances in beat and tone which they are able to extract

from the counterpoint of heel and toe. But that exhausts their qualifications — they perform their steps on one spot while the body and arms remain motionless. In brief, their dancing could be enjoyed to the full if one's eyes were firmly closed throughout their appearance.

Escudero has evolved far beyond this stage. Fortunately, however, his contact with the cosmopolitan life of Paris, his association with men like Picasso and consequent hankerings after cubism, have not weakened his firm ties with his native soil and his cultural background. Jonkheer Roëll says that, entering his studio in the French capital, one leaves Montmartre at the door and enters straightway into Spain.

The Spanish insist on a very pointed contrast between the dancing of the two sexes and, above all, they require that the man's style should be strong and virile. In so far as this convention permits, Escudero's work covers the whole field of the national choreography. One may say, however, that he is not attracted by the more formal branch in which the traces of the ballet are most noticeable. The more inherently Spanish or flamenco a dance is, the more suitable a medium it provides for the art of Vicente Escudero.

In the Jota of Aragón he successfully captures the strong, almost rude, atmosphere of the peasant dance. One sees in it the countryman, patient and industrious, but at the same time, the man whose proverb is "I

am as well-born as the king — only he is more fortunate.” The man, too, whose ancestors under the leadership of Alva made the unbreakable Spanish infantry the arbiters of fate on so many battlefields. The Jota is essentially the dance in which such a man would seek his relaxation after hours of toil in the sun and wind. Its jerky, angular movements, its humorous undertone, its continuous unchanging triple beat are far removed from the intense zapateado of the South. Of a somewhat similar character but less redolent of its peasant origin is “Variations” in which, with two girls, he dances in the manner of the early 19th century and during which the three performers converse by means of their castanets which are respectively, of silver, iron, and aluminium.

With “Córdoba” and “Seguidillas” both danced to the music of Albéniz we enter El Andalus, that land which to its Moorish conquerers was almost a terrestrial paradise, and to leave which was so bitter a parting for the defeated sons of the Prophet. We enter, too, the province which Argentina has made particularly her own. It is partly this association which makes us feel that a purely masculine interpretation could not extract the full flavour from this music, and we are not surprised that to it Escudero has arranged duets. With curves and fioriture the girl embellishes the sharp, staccato framework danced by her partner. As, after a burst of disturbing taconeó, he bounds across the stage with the rapidity of a tiger, in every step we see

the precision of the torero before the bull. Indeed, the resemblance to the world of blood and sand runs through much of his work, notably in his *Alegrías Zapateado*, in the latter part of which he lashes himself into a fury of tauromachian mimicry.

Now we are with the gypsies — the wanderers whose tents cover the face of Europe from the Urals to the Straits of Gibraltar. But we must never forget that here it is a Spanish gypsy, one whose racial traditions have been definitely moulded by Peninsular culture and dim reminiscences of the Moorish occupation. It is in these dances that Escudero the gypsy reaches his greatest heights. He is not content to imitate the work of his predecessors, but, inspired by folk dances, he develops them still further, exactly as de Falla based "*El Amor Brujo*" upon the popular *Cante Hondo* of Andalucía. It is his opinion that folk art must, like all other categories of art, either change or perish, and that, therefore, the precisians who look askance at the slightest innovation are, in reality, the worst enemies of the traditional art they are so anxious to preserve.

Of all the dances of Spain it is the *Farruca** which provides a man with the fullest opportunity of displaying his powers. In it the dancer appears to be possessed by a raging fury while yet retaining complete mastery over his movements. His legs might be rooted to the floor; they

* It is frequently danced by girls as well.

ripple as the heels and toes produce their continuous stabbing rhythms at incredible speed. Suddenly, with a bound, Escudero is at the other end of the stage. Jumping, he stamps firmly with the whole foot and comes to an abrupt stop with one of those sudden pauses which are so integral a feature of flamenco, and indeed, of all Andalusian dancing. First softly and then with rapidly increasing violence he beats on the ground with the ball of either foot in succession while his body trembles with the vibration; occasionally he makes an arm movement, always, however, clear and sharp-cut; more often he has one hand on his hip while the other holds fast the point of his chaquetilla. In a moment he hurls himself to the ground, seems stretched at length, and is, all in the same instant, once again upright.* The whole performance is punctuated by interludes of finger-snapping and hand-clapping. Combined with the background of guitar tone it has an effect quite unlike any other form of dancing. The spectator feels that he, too, shares in the dance, and one realises why it is that in Spain the onlooker accentuates the rhythm by himself clapping or by tapping the floor with his stick. One can hardly say that Escudero dances to the guitar; it would be at least equally legitimate to say that the guitarist follows the dancer. United by some bond of sympathy they so work together that they are always in perfect harmony — every *rallentando*, every pause occurs at exactly the right moment. He is quite different from the step-dancer who with mechanical precision keeps

* The movement known as a "caída"

in time to a musical accompaniment. The flamenco dancer seems to be creating rhythms in collaboration with his guitarist. The sorcery that lies in Argentina's castanets Escudero achieves with his feet.

A development of his abilities is shown in the tour-de-force "Rhythmes" which he himself considers one of the most important of his dances. In it he dispenses with the guitar and dances unaccompanied. With his zapateado, alternated and contrasted with pito and palmada, he contrives endless variations in rhythm, tempo and tone. His final feat is when he approaches the footlights, and, by rapidly flicking the nail of his thumb against that of his little finger, exhausts to the full the possibilities of the human body as an orchestral instrument. As a display of virtuosity this dance is prodigious, but it does not excite in the spectator quite the same degree of rhythmic intoxication that one experiences during the Farruca.

There is, naturally, a family likeness between his various flamenco dances, but in the Garrotín with his partner Almería we find a special fascination. His costume here is the complete antithesis of that which adorns the romantic Spaniard of Hollywood. His hat is old, battered, and shapeless; lacking a coat, he displays shirt-sleeves of a violent spotted pattern, with a scrap of handkerchief knotted round his neck. His sole claims to elegance are the high-heeled boots of the gypsy dancer, and the clothes which fit like

a glove to accentuate that carriage of the hips and the trunk which is so vital a feature of his dancing. The Garrotín as he dances it, with its air of farouche gallantry and mock terror, is most emphatically a dance of the open air, of clear, hard sunlight, of bright, strong colours. It is no exotic flower of the cabaret, but the natural dance of a race of horse-copers and fortune-tellers diverting themselves on the Sacro Monte. In steps it follows similar lines to other dances, but its charm lies in the fact that he is working with a partner, whereas in this style he usually dances alone.

Naturalness is an innate quality of his art. Every movement has the appearance of spontaneity. Can it be that there is a certain amount of improvisation in his dances? One spectator, at least, has felt, after seeing a dance repeated, that, while the general outline was similar, the details varied perceptibly from before. But such control does he possess, such perfect mastery, that there is never the least question of faltering or fumbling — every step, every beat is sharp, decided, and in unbroken continuity. In dances which show a more formal arrangement like the Miller's Dance from de Falla's "The Three-cornered Hat" or his abstraction "In Castille," one senses that he is dancing, so to speak, according to plan, and, outstanding though the performance is, the magic fluid which permeated his Rhythmes, his Alegrías, and his Farruca is no longer in evidence.

In a recent monograph André Levinson has advanced the theory that a fundamental principle of the dancing of the ballet is the development and unfolding of the limbs from the trunk. There is a continual outward extension of the arms and legs from this focal point. In Spanish dancing, on the other hand, the contrary tendency is emphasised and all movement seems directed in upon the dancer. "*Les bras, en s'encurvant, enveloppent le torse.*" The difference between the costume of the ballet dancer with its freedom, and that of the bailarina, hampered by a trailing skirt or enveloped in her shawl, illustrates this contrast quite clearly. M. Levinson is apt to exaggerate the Oriental influence on Spanish dancing, and certainly this distinction can easily be pushed too far. Nevertheless the dancing of Spain is undoubtedly the result of, and at the same time the answer to, an "inner ecstasy" experienced by the dancer. When Escudero dances he might almost be possessed by a daemon of rhythm which he is endeavouring to exorcise. It eludes him and a burst of crackling footwork ensues; he controls it again as the volume of sound wanes and the tempo slackens. Then once more the contest between rhythm and counter-rhythm is renewed and it is only concluded by the final stamp which might well symbolise Escudero's triumph over the contending forces. He does not wish that anyone should seek in his dances for meanings which he never intended to suggest. His ideal is a dance of moving lines and moving rhythms, which addresses itself primarily to the eyes and ears.

When one considers that Spain can produce two artists of the calibre of Argentina and Escudero, both dancers of the highest rank, both inspired by the national culture and music, and yet each associated with so distinct a style, one realises what a mine of choregraphic wealth lies in the tradition of Spanish dancing. Thirty years ago the war with the United States seemed to sound the death knell of Spain as a great power. Yet at that very moment was brewing the creative revival which has influenced modern art to such a profound degree. Among the illustrious band whose efforts have achieved this great work — Albéniz, Granados, de Falla, Turina, Picasso — a place must surely be found for the names of La Argentina and Vicente Escudero.

CHAPTER III.

DANCING IN SPANISH AMERICA

Of all the colonies of Spain few now remain to awaken unhappy memories of her Imperial past. Two hundred years ago the patriot could survey with complacent pride an Empire which, with the exception of Brazil, included practically the whole of Central and South America, as well as three of the states which now figure in the constellation adorning the Star-Spangled Banner; to-day the red and yellow flag, the “egg and tomato” standard of irreverent Carlists, droops rather despondently over petty, scattered African settlements and the blood-stained rocks and sand of the Riff. The majority of the colonies declared their independence during the second decade of the nineteenth century, and formed the numerous republics which we now

associate chiefly with the impermanence of their political institutions. The one substantial American possession which Spain was able to keep until comparatively recent years was the island of Cuba, which had always been in closer touch with the mother country than the more distant River Plate and the remote cities of the Pacific coast. But even in Cuba a separatist movement was rapidly becoming formidable. It culminated in the Spanish-American War of 1898, which robbed a humiliated Spain of this last relic of her Conquistadores.

On the mainland the settlers had eventually intermarried in varying proportions with the aborigines. In some instances, particularly Mexico, the Indian element is now so strong in the racial compound that families of unblemished white ancestry are a rarity. In Peru and Chile the original Spanish blood has been preserved in much greater purity. In none of these instances have negro slaves been introduced in such large quantities as materially to affect the general civilisation, but in Cuba the wholesale importation of black labour for the important sugar and tobacco industry was begun at quite an early stage in the history of the island.

The influence of negro folk rhythms on the music of Spanish America has often been discussed. In whatever degree such an influence has existed it is certain that its power has been chiefly exercised in Cuba. In their native

continent the Africans show an almost exclusive preference for music in two-four time, a taste which they carried with them both to North America and to Cuba; with the exception of the Guajiras, ternary rhythms are not encountered on the island. The lateral swaying of the body which so frequently accompanies negro singing could not be easily fitted to a triple beat, whereas duple time strongly suggests such a motion. The barbaric and novel rhythms of the plantations combined with the musical traditions of the creoles to evolve the Cuban styles, of which the Habanera, taking its name from the city of Havana, is the most conspicuous example. Exact information as to its antiquity is lacking, but its influence was not felt before the latter half of the nineteenth century. In 1861 the Spaniard Yradier visited Cuba and subsequently composed many songs in this style, of which that known as La Paloma has become almost the national anthem of Mexico. Originally danced without actual contact between the dancers, the Habanera soon became a ballroom dance in the modern sense, and, as such, spread like wildfire through the ports of Latin America, where its amorous character ensured its popularity with the frequenters of maritime haunts. In the course of these travels it entered Spain through the city of Cádiz and soon claimed numerous adherents among the "gente chico,"* but the rather crude lubricity of the unadulterated negro-creole import did not, however, accord easily with the traditions of the older civilization. Spanish dancing, even

* The Masses

if flamenco, is an art of evocation; it calls up images, hopes, and desires, but by means of a disembodied and æsthetically adequate suggestion, in which the sublimation of individual ecstasy and the expression of a personal pride in the joy of rhythm and movement are the vital factors. Actual contact between the participants in a national dance would seem as indecent to the Spaniard as did the enlaced twirling of the waltz to Lord Byron.

Although the habanera achieved some success as a ball-room dance its character was profoundly changed before its influence affected the folk-dances of Andalucía. Estebáñez Calderon remarked that the dances of American origin showed by their greater abandonment that they came from a people among whom modesty had few or no laws. "But," he continued, "It is always in vain that new songs and dances of fresh but always lascivious character arrive at Cádiz."* Before they could be embodied in the genuine national culture they had to be purged by the discriminating taste of Sevilla, "emerging pure and clothed as an Andalusian." Perhaps poetic fervour leads Calderon rather to overestimate the moral enthusiasm of the Sevillian, but what had been generated in an equatorial heat would naturally undergo some transformation in more temperate surroundings.

For some time prior to 1882 a favourite dance of the

* Escenas Andaluzas

proletariat in Cádiz had been the Tango, exhibiting musical affinities with the Habanera, but always taken much faster. This was not a ballroom dance but a gitanería* usually performed by a woman alone. Spreading from Cádiz it became widely popular and, whatever its other constituents, nearly every zarzuela was certain to include a Jota, a Seguidillas, and the Tango beloved both of the Andalusian and the gypsy. Whether the name was adopted from the Indies, or whether the dance was built up from the similar rhythm of the habanera, and christened in the peninsula, is uncertain, but there is no doubt that the unmistakeable beat of the dance from Havana opened up fresh vistas to the guitarists of the "fancy."

A song form showing a more Spanish character which was widely practised in the island, and which, especially after the American war, became popular in the mother country as well, was the Guajiras. The Andalusian rhythms had invariably been in triple time with occasional examples in six-eight, and the Guajiras differs from the usual Cuban custom in following this typical Iberian metre. It is a rather complicated form, consisting of one bar of $3/4$, followed always by two bars of $3/8$. The still-remembered Pepe Riquelme did much to popularise these songs in the peninsula, and they are now an established section of the flamenco repertory, but the music is seldom used for dancing, although José Otero arranged it for this purpose at the time when it was the rage to put dances to all the gypsy songs.

* A gypsy thing

The negro element is to be seen, almost without the slightest Spanish veneer, in the Rumba, the favourite dance of the plantations. In it the agitated, ceaseless twitching of the protagonists, and the gourd-like instruments manipulated by the orchestra, betray an almost undiluted African origin. In Cuba this dance has been confined to negroes and half-castes, and under the present régime efforts are being made to stamp it out. The music has a certain primitive strength and tang, which is probably why a music-hall form of the dance has occasionally been performed by professionals in Spain. It is not unlike the Brazilian negro dance, the Samba,* upon which Darius Milhaud has based some of his most effective music.

In the other one-time Spanish dependencies indigenous dancing of theatrical interest does not exist. If there is an exception to this rather sweeping statement it might be found in the Mexican Járabe. The Mexican, as is well-known to all amateurs of the cinematograph, is crowned by a hat notable for the magnitude of its brim and the height of its crown. During the performance of the Járabe the cavalier casts this adornment to the ground, and his partner shows her skill by dancing round its brim. In the other republics there are community and figure dances showing some kinship with similar types in Spain. Among these may be noted the Zamacueca, in triple time, the national dance of Chile, which under the name of Zamba, is also

* Not to be confused with the Argentine Zamba, a form of the Zamacueca.

danced in the north-western provinces of the Argentine. It is a spirited and picturesque performance in which much play is made with waving handkerchieves, but there is nothing particularly Spanish about it, although when played by a Chilean orchestra, which usually includes a harp, it sounds not unlike a Jota.

The national dance of the Argentine is the Pericón, a variety of rustic quadrille which is still occasionally revived at festivals and pageants, but which has no longer a real place in the life of even the most remote districts of the "camp." It is danced by four couples who form various figures, such as that of a cross, and conclude with a species of grand chain not unlike that of the English Lancers.

It is sometimes assumed that the Tango is the national dance of this Republic but such an assumption argues an ignorance of the disreputable history of that fascinating dance. Early in the course of its wanderings the ubiquitous habanera rhythm reached the port of Buenos Aires. Here, in the drinking shops and bordellos of La Boca and the ill-famed Barrio de las Ranas, seamen and gauchos from the "camp" competed for the favours of the half-Indian habituées. The gaucho, that centaur of mixed Spanish and Indian blood, divided his affections between his horse and his guitar. Although his handling of it was normally of a rather primitive nature, he devoted an interest to that instrument which indicated clearly the Spanish

origins of his race. To its accompaniment he sang innumerable airs, Cifras, Estilos, Vidalitas, Tonadas, which often evinced a real feeling for poetry, and among these men the singer and player was held in much higher honour than is usually his lot with the horsey fraternity. Becoming acquainted with the habanera rhythm in the Port, as they called the capital city, they immediately adopted it and from it created their insidious tango, which seems to possess a vitality almost equal to that of the waltz. In all the pulperías of the "camp" the tango displaced the frigid pericón as the favourite diversion of the gaucho on the periodic revels which alone relieved his solitary life under the stars of the pampas. The dance which these romantic horsemen evolved was far superior to the negroid original of Cuba. It was still sensual, but a number of figures were invented — el abanico, la media luna, el corte — which were combined in a dance providing more scope for individual expression and fantasy than any other ballroom dance has done. The convulsions and ceaseless shaking apparently inseparable from negro dancing did not appear in the gaucho tango, and if the movements of the hips were significant they were also harmonious. To the slow, marked, rhythmical music of the guitar and bandaneón* the dancers moved with a serious grace which was heightened by the swaying and floating of their picturesque costume.

Friedenthal takes rather a different view of the priority

* A form of accordion. The popularity of the tango eventually made it the national instrument of the Republic.

of the habanera and the tango.* He believes that a highly improper dance known as a tango was first danced on the Cuban plantations, from which the more refined creoles of Havana adapted the danza habanera. The name tango may have originated either in Cuba, in the Argentine, or in Spain, but for the ballroom dance, el tango, as it was first shown to Europe, the credit must be assigned to the gauchos of the Silver Republic, although even its name was then taboo in respectable Argentine circles. Owing to the nature of the establishments in which it was so popular, the upper and middle classes spoke of it with the bated breath befitting a vice of the underworld, and during its tentative appearances in Paris from 1907 onwards, it was still, in the land of its birth, confined to the "cabarets" and taverns in which the gauchos had brought it to light. The French capital received it coldly until 1912, when, perhaps through the patronage of a Parisian arbiter elegantiarum, it spread rapidly all over Europe and became a very potent factor in the vogue for ballroom dancing. Gradually it was shorn of its more flamboyant movements — its tijeras and its ruedas — and to-day the international tango of the "dancings" bears little resemblance to that with which the incomparable Bérnabe Simarra astonished Paris seventeen years ago. In the Argentine itself, though even more popular than before and admitted in the best circles, the dance has been tamed considerably; the music is now played with a more even beat, which shows less trace

* Musik, Tanz und Dichtung bei den Kreolen Amerikas

of its habanera origin, but, rendered by an Orquesta Típica, with its combination of violins, guitar, piano and, above all, bandoneónes, it has a unique atmosphere which repetition does not stale. Even in its emasculated form the Argentine tango retains something, in its pulsating beat, in its concentrated movements, and in the opportunity for phrasing the steps with the music, which provides a striking contrast to contemporary fashions in the ballroom. In spite of their rhythmical ingenuity and the mechanical perfection of synchronised movement, these are so often danced to what a conservative Argentine described as the epileptic music of North America, and in them the feeling and undeniable sentiment of the milonga * would be out of place.

Since it bears no resemblance to the tango of the gitana the foregoing is in the nature of a digression from Spanish dancing, but it must be forgiven to one who feels strongly the attraction of this dance which has "circled the world with a movement of the hips."†

* Milonga is a word rich in meanings. A class of gaucho song in 2/4 time are known as milongas but whether they existed before the appearance of the habanera is doubtful, but not impossible, since many of the Indian songs were in duple time. A tango milonga is one danced in a more intense manner, similar to the distinction between bridge and its milder derivative for the family circle. If a girl is described as "muy milonguera" it means that she dances a very sympathetic tango. Figuratively it may imply a great deal more.

† R. B. Cunningham Graham

It is very easy to exaggerate the influence of the American colonies on the dancing of Spain. In reality it has been no more than that duple rhythms, generated in Cuba by the blending of negro and Spanish elements, have been utilised by the enthusiasts of Andalucía.

CHAPTER IV.

CONCLUSION

If the twentieth century should wish to challenge comparison with the past in artistic achievement, surely it is in the realm of the ballet that the gage could be flung down with the smallest risk of subsequent humiliation? The dry and forbidding technique of Milan has been humanised by the infusion into its veins of Slav colour and virility. The union of the Russian artist and the Italian teacher has endowed the European stage with an endless succession of gorgeous and fantastic spectacles, ranging from the classic purity of Sylphides to the incarnation of the modern spirit in *Les Biches*. But, despite both a laudable desire not to be left behind in the erratic progress of cosmopolitan art, and also an inevitable fluctuation in the technical abilities of the company, the traditions of the Imperial Schools of Moscow and Petersburg have always been the foundation

upon which the fascinating super-structures have been erected.

The unambitious, more personal, dancing of Andalucía has never been the product of such a standardised or academic school. Maestros have existed there in plenty, but for the budding artist example has usually been the greatest teacher. It is quite typical of Spanish dancing that the most famous of the older masters should sell lottery tickets during the day; in the evening, his commercial duties accomplished, he watches with a benevolent eye the early efforts of Sevillian girls who may include an Imperio of the future among their number. But every notable Spanish dancer shows individual peculiarities and no two dance in quite the same way. Their dancing cannot be confined within fixed, irrefragable rules — it is too spontaneous, too sincere and too urgent. The bailarina has no message to impart, no fashion to follow, she dances as if seized by the Bacchic frenzy which must be liberated.

From the province of Andalucía come the stars both of the dance and the corrido; Ronda, Cádiz, Málaga, Granada and Sevilla have been in turn the most flourishing centres of the cult, but they are all within this small area, where dancing has entered into the very life of the inhabitants to a degree unknown elsewhere. This art has been the spasmodic, irregular blooming of talent in a fertile soil, a natural dancing, which, hallowed by a long history, is still enshrined

in the hearts of the people. The misguided efforts of those who believe the new to be inherently superior to that which can show a long ancestry, may eventually consign it to the limbo of forgotten arts. Through the world-wide triumph of Turina, Albéniz and de Falla, the educated classes are beginning to realise the value of the folk-art upon which these composers have drawn, but, before the rise of the modern craze for flamenco, Progress and the efforts of those who pursued that elusive phantom, had steadily thrust the national dances down into the social depths. Consequently, during the first two decades of the twentieth century, they were being gradually relinquished by the very classes from which they derived their vitality. Only the gypsies, lacking the sense of social shame found even in the lowest classes of ordinary citizens, have been unaffected by the amused contempt of their betters. This is the reason why, during the last few years, they have sometimes been credited with the invention of the arts they have partly taken over.

The rigid division of mankind into separate nationalities, each endowed with their special qualities, is a form of speculation which I imagine to be no longer encouraged in the best informed circles. Yet it is still probable that a given cultural environment will normally tend to emphasise certain traits and to discourage others, with a corresponding effect on the outlook of the people growing up under its influence. To this extent the dancing of Spain shows the imprint of those characteristics which experienced observers

like Havelock Ellis and Madariaga have associated with the national temperament.

This dancing is a creation of the people for their own satisfaction, in the development of which the aristocracy has played a negligible part, but it is distinguished by an inborn nobility. George Borrow remarked of the Spanish that "in their social intercourse no people in the world exhibit a juster feeling of what is due to the dignity of human nature." Both the individualism and the provincialism of the untravelled Spaniard tend to fortify that belief in the value of self-respect, which, from the example of China, would seem to be a faith engendered by traditional civilisations. In countries lacking such a background it is too often replaced by a blatant conceit exhibited to the less fortunate, and a grotesque subservience to those of superior affluence.

The haughty humility of the Spanish is typified by their attitude to Death, the one conqueror whose power they do not, in their hearts, despise. Both their pride and their pessimistic view of the relative impotence of human effort, discourage a too aggressive, and probably ineffectual, interference in the inevitable development of destiny. God gave everything to Spain, only one blessing did he withhold, that of good government; a long succession of rulers, in almost all of whom inefficiency and corruption have struggled for precedence, has helped to induce a tolerant

fatalism. If there is a bad smell, says the Andalusian proverb, well, what of it? A hundred years hence you will be without a nose. This indolence is encountered more especially in the South where the influence of an Oriental acquiescence in fate has not yet disappeared. Speaking of idleness Ford said that, "This to most Spaniards is a foretaste of the bliss of Heaven, while occupation, thought in England to be happiness, is the treadmill doom of the lost forever."

But in reaction from this passive background they feel impelled to indulge in occasional displays of intense and vital energy. Although their dancing regards the acrobatic as indecent, it is an art which shows no traces of a languid weariness. Placing reliance neither on décor, orchestral accompaniment, nor on spectacular massed effects, it far exceeds the ballet in violence and passion, both in its movements and still more in its sentiments.

An innate poise, together with the feeling for ritual which distinguishes the Spaniard alike in the church and the bull-ring, prevents the violence of a natural form of dancing from degenerating into the license to which such forms are otherwise liable. Where exaggeration has crept in, the blame must be imputed to gypsy or to colonial influence. To the Spaniard it is an insoluble mystery that the wanton Carmen should be taken by foreigners as the national type; to him, Salud, the heroine of de Falla's *La Vida Breve*, is

not only a representative more pleasing to his national pride, but also a more truly typical example of the womanhood of Spain. There can be little doubt that the Carmen legend has been fostered by the meteoric careers of women like Lola Montes and other more recent sirens, whose dancing has been a jest to their compatriots, but whom foreign audiences have taken at their own valuation. The great dancers of the past, the Pastora Imperios and the Amalia Molinas, have seldom been seen outside their own country or the Spanish American republics.*

Watching a great dancer one is conscious of an element of tragedy which increases with the genius of the artist. Of all the arts there is none so ephemeral as this, the earliest. The volumes of every scribbler can accumulate dust in the library of the British Museum, and the relative immortality of painting and sculpture are assured when they possess any pecuniary value. Gramophone records can preserve for future generations the unique flavour of a Kreisler or a Pachmann, "*mais ou sont les danseuses d'antan?*" The dancer is not only the executant, but, in many cases, she is also the composer of her mortal art. Words cannot encompass the

* The prospect of a foreign contract seems to bring out a very mercenary strain in the Spanish, especially where Great Britain is concerned, that being the country which they are old-fashioned enough to regard as fantastically wealthy. In Mr. C. B. Cochran's *Reminiscences* there is a very instructive account of his negotiations with the great male dancer Ramírez. When the latter found that his first two or three requests were granted, his demands became daily more extortionate. Consequently, like Dunsany's tragic hero who never came to Carcassonne, Ramírez never came to London.

fluid lines of the dance, the stabbing, swaying rhythm of its movements. Whether any ingenious synchronisation of music with the moving picture will really succeed in capturing their beauty is still only a possibility. To the ordinary man it seems as if the efforts of the pontiffs of the screen might be more profitably employed in working to such an end, than in their present deplorable activities. As, however, Hollywood appears to be blessed only with one faculty, that of cultivating and supplying the prevalent taste for alternate doses of gilded vice and lachrymose aged mothers, it is improbable that they will follow the refreshing example of intelligent initiative set by the Soviet government.* The pessimistic gesture of an old man, who sees his favourite art in danger of disappearance in the stress of modernisation, led Otero to say to a recent interviewer, "Farewell, Sevilla! Farewell, the noble art of the Dance!" It is to be hoped, however, that posterity will not have to depend for its experience of Spanish dancing upon a combination of vision and sound which could never approach within measurable distance of reality.

All to whom dancing is more than the diversion of an idle hour must pray that this manifestation of its great power will not drag out a diminishing prestige in the indifference of an unappreciative world. To-day there are still many young and promising dancers ready to take their place in the honourable line of bailarinas. But if the art should lose its

* The Russians have been using the cinematograph to record the folklore of the various Asiatic peoples who come within the bounds of the U. S. S. R.

hold upon the affections of the Spanish people, it may fall into the hands of "gypsies of the music hall, manufactured in series in Sevilla."* They would display, not the true embodiment of a living tradition, but merely those elements which are most effective theatrically, adulterated with extraneous tricks.

The raised curtain reveals a deserted stage. Chatter and all the inevitable subdued noises fill the theatre. Suddenly, from behind the scenes is heard the sharp, spirit-stirring click, that unique note of the castanets that can arouse life from beneath the ribs of death. In that moment before the dancer appears we experience a thrill, a deepening of the emotions, which no other form of dancing can give, which no other art can yield. It is a civilised appeal, but it cuts through layers of acquired culture and literary associations, and answers to an almost physical need.

Jacinto Benavente found in the dancing of Pastora Imperio something which, equally with the drama of Shakespeare, supported his belief in God. To Havelock Ellis no more beautiful sight has been granted than that of the dancing of a Spanish girl. When she traces those curving lines, beats out those living rhythms, weaves those spirals with her arms, she responds to the demands both of the spirit and the senses. Though the ideal of this dance may be nothing more than that of moving lines and moving rhythms, yet, when presented by a great dancer, it convinces us of the existence of a complete and perfect beauty, that wavering faith so pathetically in need of confirmation.

* A Levinson in "Argentina"

GLOSSARY

- Copla :** A verse of a song, the number of lines varying according to the type to which it belongs. A Seguidillas verse has four lines of alternately seven and five syllables, and it is followed by an estribillo or refrain of three lines, which contain five, seven and five syllables respectively. The sections into which some classic dances are divided, e.g., Sevillanas or Peteneras, are also referred to as coplas, although they are of longer duration than one verse of the corresponding song.
- Chaquetilla :** The short, tight-fitting jacket which constitutes the street wear of the torero; it is also worn by the male flamenco dancer, and it is affected by all those señoritos flamencos, who imitate the speech and behaviour of the "fancy."
- Jaleo :** The accompaniment of rhythmical hand-clapping which is a feature of Andalusian dancing.
- Jerezana :** A step in which the dancer pats the ground, as it were, with the ball of her foot and then flicks it up causing her skirt to flounce.
- Palillos :** The usual name for castanets.
- Palmada :** This is the term which includes both the clapping of the hands and the slapping of the thighs, which occur in the flamenco.
- Pito :** Finger snapping.

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* In co operation with Miss Derra de Moroda.

